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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1894
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 001393

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON, SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: MY MY, IS THAT AN OCAMPO YOU'RE WEARING?

¶1. SUMMARY: The latest fashion craze for Sudanese women is a toup (traditional Sudanese sari-like dress) named after International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo. The "Ocampo" toup is a glittering, sequin-heavy design of chiffon. Its title continues a trend of naming clothing items and other ubiquitous parts of the Khartoum cultural landscape after significant social and political figures. In a society where the concept of "sex sells" is illegal, sardonic epithets are one the few ways of venting that is vaguely tolerated by the regime. END SUMMARY.

¶2. Since the 1960s, merchants have been giving nicknames to products in Sudan that have made their mark on the cultural tapestry of the country. The Khartoum Belail ("Khartoum in the Night") refers to an item of clothing with glitter-encrusted fabric, which was popular with women throughout Sudan when Khartoum was the only major city with regular electricity. Likewise, in the 1970s the donning of a "Leyla Elwi" was for those hoping for a bit of the glamour made popular by an Egyptian movie star of the same name. Proving that Ocampo wasn't the first Argentine to leave a cultural mark on Sudan, the striped "Maradona" (named after the famous soccer player and his signature jersey) was a hit.

¶3. Beginning with the fall of Nimeri's regime in the 1980s, however, the "Intifada" ("uprising") toup marked the beginning of a political slant for items across the Sudanese marketplace. With the signing of the CPA, the "Naivasha" became in style. After John Garang's death, a popular Nokia cell phone was given the handle "Salva Kiir" (so-called because it, too, was "new and black.") And the ever-present wide-body Toyota pick-up truck was given the moniker "Widad Babikir" (after Sudanese President Bashir's full-figured second wife.) Along with the "Ocampo," a red silk design known as "Hummer" (after the American military vehicle) is currently one of most popular and expensive items, retailing at over USD 300 per toup.

¶4. COMMENT: In a society where the nightlife of Khartoum was once the envy of the continent and Sudanese university students were revered for their objective attitudes, Sharia law and authoritarian rule have forced many sentiments underground. As a recent Agence France-Presse article on the "Ocampo toup" recently suggested, despite its popularity, many shopkeepers are reluctant to openly label or talk to foreigners about this latest fashion trend. But these nicknames can provide a glimpse into the critical mindset still alive inside a people largely disgruntled with their government.

FERNANDEZ